

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT A 03579 211859Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3633
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USMISSION USUN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT AU PRINCE 3579

PASS CONGRESSMAN PETER RODINO

EO 11652 N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, OREP, HA
SUBJECT: HAITIAN WEEKLY CALLS FOR IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS
PERFORMANCE

REF: (A) PORT AU PRINCE 3505, (B) PORT AU PRINCE 3382,
(C) PORT AU PRINCE 3361, (D) PORT AU PRINCE 3441

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS THE GOH HAS BEEN DIRECTLY
AND PUBLICLY CRITICIZED IN THE LOCAL PRESS FOR ITS
PERFORMANCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS. THE LATEST EDITION OF OUTSPOKEN
WEEKLY "JEUNE PRESSE", WHICH APPEARED DECEMBER 15, SAID:
QUOTE WE CANNOT DENY IT, ON MANY OCCASIONS SINCE THE
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WE, JUST AS OTHER
NATIONS, HAVE FAILED IN OUR COMMITMENT. END QUOTE IT
ADDED THAT QUOTE THE PRESS MUST ENSURE THAT HUMAN RIGHTS
ARE RESPECTED....FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED FURTIVELY
BY LITTLE BLOWS IN THE SHADOWS....AND EACH OF THESE BLOWS
IS OFTEN SO MINIMAL THAT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO JUSTIFY
DEFENSIVE ACTION, AT LEAST AT THE TIME. WHAT IS
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ESSENTIAL IS TO EXPOSE THESE CASES OF VIOLATIONS
PRECISELY, INCESSANTLY AND TOTALLY, TO STRUGGLE
AGAINST THIS DESTRUCTIVE PROCESS. END QUOTE

2. AS REPORTED IN PORT AU PRINCE 3505, THE
LENGTHY EDITORIAL QUOTED EXTENSIVELY FROM U.S.

REPRESENTATIVE SCRANTON'S NOVEMBER 24 HUMAN RIGHTS ADDRESS BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS, THE TEXT OF WHICH WAS PROVIDED TO "JEUNE PRESSE" IN A USIS PRESS RELEASE. THE EDITORIAL WAS ALSO BASED IN PART ON THREE OTHER USIS RELEASES ON THE SUBJECT (HUMAN RIGHTS AN INTEGRAL PART OF U.S. FOREIGN AID; DEPUTY USUN REPRESENTATIVE CONGRATULATES CHILE FOR PRISONER RELEASE; AND THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE UN AND IN THE US). "JEUNE PRESSE" RECALLED PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER'S REFERENCES TO CONDITIONING AID ON HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE, AND NOTED INCREASING CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST AS EVIDENCED BY THE APRIL 1974 VISIT TO HAITI OF SENATOR EDWARD BROOKE.

3. THE BOLD LANGUAGE APPEARED ONLY TWELVE DAYS AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN PETER RODINO WHO SPENT ONE WEEK IN HAITI ON A FACT FINDING MISSION (PORT AU PRINCE 3382). THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE "JEUNE PRESSE" EDITORIAL IS A DIRECT REACTION TO THE RODINO VISIT, INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES BY MISSION OFFICERS, AND USIS MEDIA EFFORTS. IT IS SYMBOLIC OF GREATLY HEIGHTENED AWARENESS AND MORE PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AND MAY SIGNAL THE BEGINNING OF MORE OPEN CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION BY THE MEDIA, THE GOH, AND THE INTELLIGENTSIA.

4. THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF RECENT INTERIOR MINISTRY ATTEMPTS TO STIFLE SOME REPORTING BY CALLING IN REPORTERS AND EDITORS AND DEMANDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JUSTIFICATIONS FOR STORIES THE GOH WISHES WERE LESS WELL PUBLICIZED. THE "BLOWS IN THE SHADOWS" NEREE MENTIONS ARE REMINISCENT OF THE STIL UNSOLVED JUNE 1 MURDER OF "PETIT SAMEDI SOIR" REPORTER GASNER RAYMOND. THE EDITORIAL, THEREFORE, WAS AN ACT OF CONSIDERABLE COURAGE. IT IS THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF A GAME OF JOURNALISTIC BRINKMANSHIP, A DETERMINED EFFORT BY SOME IN THE MEDIA TO PROBE, TO TEST AND TO FEEL THEIR WAY VERY CAREFULLY TOWARD GREAT PRESS FREEDOM. ISHAM

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